

**Speech**  
**Chargé d’Affaires Robert Yamate**  
**English Teachers’ Association Symposium**  
**Dakar, Senegal**  
**February 22, 2013**

The Representative of the Minister of Education of Senegal,

Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Senegal,

Honored guests,

Educators and teachers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

We are here today to celebrate the English Teachers’ Association Symposium which was held this past week in Dakar. Thank you to the Senegalese Ministry of Education and to the Ministries of Education from the countries represented here tonight for their ongoing partnership with the United States Embassy and for working with us to improve the quality of English language programs in Sub-Saharan Africa.

We share the common belief that English language capability is deeply valuable for the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and is closely tied into increased economic development for the region.

While English is no better than French, Wolof, or any other language, knowing English is extremely valuable. It is more than just a cliché to say that “English is the indispensable language of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

As learning English depends on the skills of our English teachers, the reason we are here today, I would like to salute the 26 teachers -- representing 12 different countries and 12 teachers’ associations -- who gathered for three days here in Dakar.

I am confident that each one of you contributed to discussions and shared your rich experiences with the other participants. I am also confident that all of you will share what you have learned here with your colleagues when you return home.

By actively sharing your new knowledge with others, many can learn how to improve practices; help all teachers to develop professionally; strengthen civil society; and ultimately improve one's country. This is a weighty but important responsibility.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the facilitators: Brock Brady, George Pickering and Mawa Samb for their hard work and dedication. I know that they put long hours into designing the program, facilitating the workshops, and will be following up with webinars.

And I would like to thank our colleagues at the British Council. This symposium represents an ongoing partnership between the Department of State's Regional English Language Office in Dakar and the British Council. This cooperation is exemplary and I know that we will continue to work closely together in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the educators in the room who work so hard every day to improve the English language skills of their students. When you help students to improve their English, you are helping them to open doors and to access new opportunities.

English is a key skill for participating in research, for accessing employment opportunities, and for conducting business throughout the world.

We stand ready at the U.S. Embassy to help you do this important work, and I encourage you, if you are not already, to be in touch with our Regional English Language Office.

I very much appreciate all of your hard work and I congratulate you on completing such an important program. And I look forward to hearing about the great projects to be undertaken by all of the English Teachers' Associations in the Sub-Saharan region.

Thank you.